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Army Management Staff College
5500 21st St.
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5934
(703) 805-4759

Sustaining Base Leadership and Management

College-level program offers one way to develop future leaders

By Marcia L. Klein

The June 5 deadline is fast approaching for the next Sustaining Base and Leadership Management program, a college-level course of instruction that can help supervisors address what the Office of Personnel Management has recently found to be a “serious problem that has the potential to worsen” in the area of first-level supervisor development.

The OPM study, “Supervisors in the Federal Government: A Wake-up Call,” released April 2 found that most federal agencies “do not identify employees with supervisory potential and develop them for future leadership positions.” OPM called on federal agencies to make “the selection and development of first-level supervisors a top human resource management priority.”

Supervisors in sustaining base agencies and programs can address that priority by encouraging up-and-coming employees to apply for the SBLM course to be offered beginning Sept. 17 by the Army Management Staff College at Fort Belvoir, Va. The course, open to all services, is specifically designed to educate the civilian and military personnel who will become the future leaders of the sustaining base.

“SBLM graduates become the leaders who not only can, but do solve problems, who understand the varied levels of organization and the connections between systems, and who have vision, flexibility, a “can-do” attitude, and a selfless organizational focus. They use those professional skills to improve their organizations, and pass on what they’ve learned to others so they may benefit, too,” said Col. Philip L. Wilkerson Jr., AMSC commandant. “In today’s “war for talent” supervisors can’t afford *not* to send personnel for advanced education. If we don’t give our employees the opportunity to grow, they *will* go someplace where they *do* get that opportunity.”

The Army’s sustaining base consists of those agencies and programs which train the soldier, prepare the soldier for operations, get the soldier to the operation, sustain the soldier during the operation and return that soldier home. The sustaining base also includes the programs aimed at the well being of soldiers and their families, to provide them a quality of life equal to or better than that which the soldier is pledged to defend.

“Allowing your employees to pursue professional education is an indication of a supervisor’s own farsightedness and planning abilities. You may be without a valued employee for a short time, but you get back someone who will provide much more in-depth knowledge and support for your office,” said Dr. Ursula Lohmann, dean of the college. “By the way, this is also an opportunity for an on-the-job developmental assignment for another employee left at home station.”

Research on SBLM graduates has shown that they have been promoted more than twice as often as non-SBLM graduates. Supervisors of SBLM graduates report that their employees return to their jobs with the ability to handle increased responsibility, with the

potential to move into senior leadership positions and with increased value to the organization.

Civilians in general service grades 12-14 (GS-11s and 15s may apply by exception) may apply on-line. Officers in grades O-4 and O-5 can request attendance through their branch managers. On-line applications must be approved by supervisors and reach headquarters, Department of the Army, by June 5.

For more information on the program or to begin the application process, log on to www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil.

[Editor's note: Klein is the AMSC public affairs officer, (703) 805-4759, marcia.klein@amsc.belvoir.army.mil. The full OPM study can be found at www.opm.gov/studies.]